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STRATEGIC LOGIC ESSAY

**US INTERVENTION IN FAILED STATES:
BAD ASSUMPTIONS = POOR OUTCOMES**

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Introduction

The purpose of this paper will be the application of the Deibel Model, in particular the first level (assumptions) to the problem of failed states and the US, with an objective of identifying future threats and opportunities. The past 20 years have witnessed, among other events, the end of the Cold War, with a corresponding destabilization of the existing bipolar system that maintained a semblance of international order for almost 50 years. One feature of this destabilization has been the failure, in traditional terms, of existing states. States refers to political entities that may or may not correspond to nations (more often referring to people groups); thus a nation-state in strict terms is a state whose territory corresponds to that occupied by a particular nation (Baylis, 1997).

No matter the reason or rationale for the breakdowns of these failed states, one consistent factor has been the requirement for external actors to play a part both in the cessation of conflict and the restoration of order. US intervention, both unilateral and bilateral, in these failed states has been a central theme in the ongoing debate over the US global role for the 21st Century. It is apparent from recent involvement by the US, and this paper will go on to demonstrate, that US intervention in failed states has been beset by faulty assumptions about the domestic and international arena leading to significant limitations on the long-term success of these interventions. Failed states present opportunities for shaping the international environment in the short term, but this must be balanced with the longer-term requirements (threat) of the restoration of those states, a facet that is not often regarded in the preparation and planning for intervention.

Failed States Defined

An intact state is one that has an “imagined political community, [one which is] both inherently limited and sovereign” (Anderson, 1991). Accordingly, a nation exists when a significant number of people in a community consider themselves to form a nation, or behave as if they formed one. Nations also have “finite boundaries, beyond which lie other nations.” A nation is also sovereign; it has power

over its citizens (this can be derived from popular decree or from some form of dictatorship which wields power). States also have a component of community, which is a type of “deep, horizontal comradeship;” even if one does not personally know another individual in the nation, there is still a sense of mutual comradeship, each willing to fight to protect their community of strangers (Anderson, 1991).

Conversely, failed states can be described as those that are unable to maintain themselves within the international community--government systems have collapsed, and they can not provide basic resources or protection for citizens. States can fail for a variety of environmental, economic, or internal security threats, the salient issue here is that states will continue to fail and that as long as the US retains a prominent position in the international order it will be called upon to provide some form of response to this issue (Nordberg, 1998).

Cold War Victims

One viewpoint on this issue is that those states which can be said to have failed since the end of the Cold War are victims of the struggle between the superpowers, and that the US, as the victor of that struggle, owes it to the world community and the victims themselves to step in and render aid (Dorff, 1996). In any event, the US has chosen to selectively intervene with failed states, and so a brief review of several of the significant examples follows.

Somalia

An extremely impoverished country on the Horn of Africa, Somalia has experienced warfare and internal strife for generations. In January 1991, the sitting President Siad Barre (a former Army general who seized power in 1969) survived an attempted coup but chose to flee to Kenya in the face of mounting opposition. Internal problems were vast, and were headed by growing internecine clan warfare and mounting famine. In response, the US organized a famine relief effort in December of

1992 that was nominally intended to restore conditions so that relief agencies could receive and deliver food supplies. At this point, Somalia had no unified government, no working infrastructure, and was experiencing considerable unrest and violence brought about by struggles between contending clans.

US intervention in Somalia consisted of the deployment of military assets to restore order until a sufficient UN force could be mounted, and later an active role in the hunt for Somali warlord Muhammad Farah Aidid (resulting in notable US casualties and mounting questions about the American role in Somalia in particular, and nation building in general). The US withdrew from Somalia in March of 1994. The largest and strongest warring clans signed a peace agreement in 1998, but the country remains in the grip of poverty, natural disasters, and stagnation.

Rwanda

Rwanda, another small African country, is populated principally by two major tribes, the Hutu and the Tutsi. The Hutu had been the political majority since the early 1960s, and were being increasingly besieged by Tutsi rebel activity into the 1990s. With the death of the Hutu president in April of 1994, the country plunged into chaos with Tutsi now hunting down Hutu to exact revenge, and Hutu doing the same. Almost 2 million refugees crossed the border into Zaire, prompting strident calls for international intervention to restore order. The killing proceeded well into 1998, and was accelerated by cholera epidemics, AIDS, and the inability of refugees to find sufficient food and water.

US intervention in Rwanda was limited to words and a short-lived, small-scale deployment in support of refugee management and food/water delivery. These efforts came after the initial waves of killings in 1994, earning the US condemnation for not acting sooner or more forcefully.

Haiti

This small nation in the Caribbean shares a border with the Dominican Republic, and has been burdened with a dearth of natural resources, virtual abandonment after European colonization, US

occupation in the early 1900s, and practical dictatorship under successive Duvalier regimes. Jean-Bertrand Aristide, a Catholic priest, gained the presidency in 1991 and immediately earned the enmity of the military by dismissing the entire army high command for past abuses. He was ousted after seven months by a former Army general (Raoul Cedras) who oversaw the further degeneration of the Country, hastened by the imposition of multilateral economic sanctions led by the United States. Conditions became so bad that, after a stalled attempt at UN intervention, the US led an invasion in September 1994 to oust Cedras and return Aristide to power, and to address the appalling circumstances in Haiti (one facet of which was an increasing flood of refugees to the United States).

The US invasion did serve to stem the flow of refugees, and allowed a broader UN presence to move in and address infrastructure issues. Haiti is now functioning at a level comparable to that of the 1980s—impoverished, underdeveloped, and ripe with the conditions for unrest and eventual collapse--again.

The Balkans

This area of Southeastern Europe, stretching into Slovenia between the Adriatic and Aegean seas, is comprised of Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Romania, part of Turkey, and Serbia. Differing brands of communism up to and past the end of the Cold War, ethnic infighting, religious dispute, and state borders imposed haphazardly over nations and people groups have set the conditions for warfare and state failure in this region. Slovenia, Croatia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina have all fought uncoordinated wars to win independence from the Serb-dominated Yugoslav Federation.

More recently the Province of Kosovo and Macedonia have seen insurgency and increasing rebel activity leading to the complete breakdown of government systems.

US direct action in the Balkans began in 1994, and extends into the future with US presence in Bosnia, Kosovo, Albania, Macedonia, and Greece. Although much of the unrest has been stopped, little has

been done to address the underlying problems for conflict and it has been said that the international community is doing little more than separating the opponents between rounds.

Application of Level One of the Deibel Model

As Figure 1 illustrates, the Deibel Model shows in broad terms where Levels Two through Five demonstrate minor differences driven mainly by the time frame and domestic agenda surrounding and structuring US actions. Level 1, however, shows overarching premises that can be applied to each case, and more importantly defines assumptions that can be said to have impeded US ‘success’ (however it may have been defined in each case).

Figure 1: Deibel Model Applied to Selected Failed States

Level 1: Assumptions about the nation and the world: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - US is now the sole superpower, the rest of the world looks to it for action & direction. - Emerging US strategy of engagement and enlargement (Clinton). - Hubris? In the wake of the success of ‘winning’ the Cold War and the overwhelming victory in Desert Storm, the Administration was in a position to believe it could accomplish broad objectives in minor areas. - CNN effect - Post-Cold War ‘defense dividend’ possible imperative to ‘use it or lose it...’ - State failure = regional impacts leading to potential economic impacts - Humanitarian interests (“We [the US] have to do something...”) - Other states will fail; the US will be compelled to be involved in some way. 					
Level 2: National Interests and Threats to it	Elements	Somalia 1992	Rwanda 1994	Haiti 1994	The Balkans 1995
	• National Survival:	No Threat	No Threat	Low (Refugees)	Low (Economic)
	• National Welfare/Prosperity:	No Threat	No Threat (Expectation built by Somali Intervention)	Low (Prestige, Internal Dissension)	Low (Prestige and European Allies’ Concerns)
	• Preservation of Values:	Yes	Yes, But Not as Widely Viewed	Tempered with Border Violations	Broad Democratic Values
	• Projection of Values:	Yes	Yes	Yes, Through UN	Constrained, Work Thru Others
	• Threats/Opportunities:	Not Apparent	Threats More Apparent	Regional Hegemon	Medium (Chance of Failure High)
Level 3: Foreign Policy Objectives	• Risk:	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium- High
	• Desirability (based on Nat’l Interest and Cost):	Medium (Public Opinion)	Low (Post Somalia Public Opinion)	Medium (on US doorstep, regional issue)	Medium (Benevolent Arbitrator)

Figure 1: Deibel Model Applied to Selected Failed States

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feasibility (based on Availability of Resources & Constraints): 	High	Medium (Based on no mission parameters)	High (Easy, Close, and Part of US's Back Yard)	Medium-Low (Depended on Allied Support)
Level 4: Power and Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessment of National Power: Availability of National Power: Cost of Using Resources: 	High High Low	Medium Medium Medium	Medium Medium Medium	Medium Medium-Low --Military Commitments Medium
Level 5: Plans and Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fit of Ends to Means: Plan of Action: Policy Priorities: 	No Short-Term Food Everywhere, Reduce Negative Media	No Undefined Don't get involved in another Somalia...	Yes Stabilize and Turn Over to the UN, Stop Refugees Domestic Opinion, Need to get it Right This Time	Yes Dayton Accords Stabilize, Restore Order, Prevent Spread
	Elements	Somalia	Rwanda	Haiti	Balkans

Level 1 contains broad assumptions about the US as a nation, and the world surrounding it.

These will be further broken down into sub-categories and discussed below; suffice it to say that American intervention in failed states thus far demonstrates that erroneous assumptions can lead to less than successful outcomes.

Controversies Over Facts and Intelligence

The US assumed, in the case of Somalia, that relatively small and poorly armed paramilitaries would not present an insurmountable threat to conducting stabilization operations. As the force levels increased, so too did the level of American and coalition firepower; however, there was a corresponding increase in the boldness and tenacity of warlord opposition. Much as in Vietnam, the American reliance on advanced weaponry and assumed superiority of its fighting men and women led in most cases to tactical victory but ultimately strategic loss (particularly in the media-supported war of public opinion). This also fed the fires of the notion that risk and casualties were to be averted at all costs, leading

eventually to burdensome force protection measures that have hampered US forces in Haiti, Bosnia, Kosovo, East Timor, and other areas.

Constraints And Opportunities In The International System

Coming out of victory in the Cold War and Desert Storm, a common theme has been that the US is now the world's only superpower, and as such the rest of the globe looks to it for both action and direction. While this may be true with the first world order, many second and third tier nations still resent American (and all foreign) influence and intervention. Simply put: the US is not as welcome as it might always suppose. For purely humanitarian efforts, unfortunate victims have certainly welcomed US resources; however, potential aggressors have not stood idly by or supported those efforts (examples include the warlords in Somalia, Tutsi and Hutu bands in Rwanda, organizers and perpetrators of ethnic cleansing in the Balkans, and paramilitary elements in Haiti).

The adoption of the engagement and enlargement approach by the first Clinton Administration provided other constraints and opportunities. This methodology has had a tendency to gauge international issues from an economic perspective, and has required that US intervention incorporate and export elements of democracy to those being supported (in short, the assumption is that the prescription for a failed state is a strong shot of democracy...). Again, this has not brought success to areas where there is no functioning economic infrastructure; moreover, it does not take root well in countries with traditions of autocracy and strong central government.

Constraints And Opportunities In The Domestic System

Domestically, there has been the American imperative of a “do something” policy, where planning and foresight are often superceded by the need to address emotional and photogenic issues quickly. Another factor has been the so-called “CNN Effect,” where enhanced media capabilities to broadcast tragedy and suffering have been said to impel government agencies into action.

Additionally, the much vaunted defense dividend assumed to be available with the close of the Cold War provided impetus for successive Administrations to take a “use it or lose it” approach to employing military assets to address humanitarian and peacekeeping issues. Certainly the military departments themselves were in a state of “mission seek” in the early 1990s, and in many cases sought out roles in peace enforcement and intervention to retain budgets and force structure.

Finally, the US came off a stunning and overwhelming victory in the Gulf War, and operated (until being reacquainted with an unconventional and crafty opponent in Somalia) under the assumption that its military and civil resources were proven and superior, and easily up to the task of restoring order in failed states—the notion of hubris. In a sense US leadership was forced to re-learn the lessons of Vietnam (as eventually codified by Colin Powell in his position as Chairman of the JCS).

Projections Of Future Trends

Failed states being largely a late-Twentieth Century phenomenon, and an unplanned by-product of a destructured bipolar world, the US had no model or basis for comparison to approach these situations with. The one accurate projection has been that additional states will fail, and the US will be expected to play a role in stabilization and order. Beyond that, the Executive Branch has not been able to establish any other dependable criteria for confronting its role in dealing with future failed states. This in itself may be the correct approach; certainly there should be no ‘cookie cutters’ used in this type of intervention. Each failed state has its own historical basis and (likely) regional solution—the US should not assume a preeminent role in all cases nor should it consider itself to always be part of the solution.

Threats and Opportunities

Dealing with future failed states will present the United States with challenges and corresponding opportunities to act within the international order. In some cases the risks may outweigh the gains; as in Rwanda, the US might be inspired to simply turn a blind eye rather than

chance failure. In most cases though, America will be expected and desire to structure and participate in any response to this type of situation.

Threats

As in the aforementioned case studies, potential threats include rejection by the citizens or organized elements of the failed state itself. It is not hard to imagine that those wishing to continue exploiting the diamond mines in Sierra Leone would have met US intervention with stiff opposition; the question is whether the threat of casualties would outweigh the benefits of participation. A second threat is that of long-term commitment. Americans typically support short duration, tangibly-achievable operations; it is doubtful that being ‘stuck to the tar baby’ would bring any long term gain to the United States or that such commitments would be sustainable in light of opposing public opinion. These situations should be considered in light of the potential consequences of not intervening—will the region or the US economy be materially affected?

Finally, the US must consider the potential threat of failure. In a scenario such as that found in the Balkans, where considerable resources have been committed for a long-duration intervention (not to mention national prestige, such as that engendered by brokering the Dayton Peace Accords), the Country must consider whether its treasure is being invested in a wise manner. Are we merely separating opponents for a time? If conflict renews before or after US intervention, what will be the impact on US standing within the international order?

Opportunities

There are certainly tangible benefits to be gained from intervention in failed states. First, the US only enhances and strengthens its position as a superpower by leading efforts to conduct what are inarguably positive actions (restoring order, rebuilding infrastructure, delivering food, etc.). The US

also augments its economic position by strengthening other future trading partners and providing for regional stability.

Finally, in concert with the US policy of engagement and enlargement, intervention in failed states is a tremendous opportunity to spread democracy and demonstrate American values and ideals. The US can present significant challenges to opposing ideologies with the example of an international Good Samaritan.

Conclusions—Policy Recommendations

The United States should address initial assumptions about dealing with smaller nations, particularly those classified as failed states. Much has been learned with the experiences of the 1990s in a multitude of regions. The US must take a proactive stance for dealing with initial triage of a failed state, but must also develop policies for responding within the framework of a regional or alliance entity such as the OAS (in Latin America) NATO in Europe, or the United Nations for long duration interventions.

Operating under the assumption that the next decade will see more state failures, trained and ready military and civil elements should be identified and sequestered for the task of responding in intervention scenarios. These combined political-military task forces will relieve combat units of the duality of training for war and peacekeeping, as well as enabling more comprehensive responses to regional and disaster-oriented situations.

Finally, the US must better prepare regional CINCs for responding and operating in the policy arena by strengthening and expanding policy agents within those organizations. Simply assigning a POLAD is not sufficient; elements of regional Assistant Secretariats from the State Department should be detached for duty within the CINC's organization, and the POLAD given co-equal status with the CINC himself. This will facilitate CINCs' policy activities, in this case with specific regard to intervention in failed states within their respective regions.

Post Script: Impact of September 11, 2001

In light of the terrorist attack on the United States that occurred on 11 September 2001, American involvement in failed states is no longer an issue that can be addressed in the absence of other types of conflict. President Bush has declared a new type of war (against terrorism), one that will be waged discriminately, both internationally and domestically, and for a protracted period. Some potential effects of this activity with regard to failed states are:

1. Reluctance and inhibitions to becoming involved in purely humanitarian efforts, either because of a diversion of resources, concern over inviting additional terrorist attacks (on military deployed abroad as potential targets or by offending religious or ethnic groups with US intervention), or simply because the days when the US can afford to undertake such expeditions at the expense of homeland defense are over.
2. Increasing willingness to commit deadly force to achieve US aims. With the promise of a long war against terrorism that will result in casualties, the American unwillingness to withstand friendly body counts may decline. In Somalia the Public's aversion to casualties meant that the warlords got their way—killing a few Americans led to the withdrawal of their opposition. This may not be the case in the near future, where the US now seems much more ready to accept casualties and employ firepower to achieve its aims.
3. Public debate will undoubtedly become more pronounced before committing US forces and treasure to such enterprises. Americans are now focused inward, questioning their own defense and interactions with large parts of the international community (the Muslim world) in particular. There is now a definable mission for our military, one that will probably eclipse other nations' internal problems for some time to come.
4. Finally, it is also possible that the new war on terrorism will include (within the notion of 'draining the swamp') plans to engage terrorist groups abroad who are in fact threats to their

own (willing or unwilling) host countries. This effort could help alleviate, or even accelerate the failure of already weakened states. It is too soon to tell, but this debate may even change the current notion of what constitutes a failed state, who needs US help, or what form American assistance should take.

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